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2 HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, December 22, 1931. Department of Agriculture

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "An Inexpensive Christmas Menu." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletins available: "Cooking Cured Pork. Leaflet number 81."

--ooooOoooo--

A less expensive dinner for a thrifty Christmas can be just as good and just as Christmasy as one planned with all the frills and expensive items of food.

I'll prove that by giving you first thing this morning the inexpensive Christmas dinner menu that I promised yesterday. This menu, by the way, is especially easy to serve to a large crowd. Better consider it if you're having lots of relatives and friends around your Christmas dinner table.

Everybody ready please to write the menu? And as you write, see how nicely the red and green color are carried out.

First course: Hot tomato bouillon or cocktail with finely chopped parsley sprinkled over the top just before serving. That fine recipe in the radio cookbook is just the thing here.

Main course: Baked smoked ham; Buttered cauliflower; Creamed spinach; Candied sweet potatoes--yams are especially good; Crisp celery; Cranberry sauce; Homemade pickles or relish.

For dessert: Chocolate jellied plum pudding; Coffee; and Red and green candies.

Many of the items on this menu are to be found in the green radio cookbook. The tomato cocktail recipe as mentioned is there, only, just for variety, we are serving it hot instead of cold with this menu. Directions for creamed spinach, candied sweet potatoes, and cranberry sauce are also there. The creamed spinach is one of the best ways to fix that valuable vegetable so that every member of the family will enjoy it. The recipe, however, calls for a cup of cream. If that seems to make the cost of this meal rise a bit too much, use buttered spinach instead.

With the tomato cocktail to start the meal with, and a good supply of vegetables in the main course, to say nothing of pickles or relishes, a salad isn't necessary, so we have no included one on this menu.



The dessert, instead of being the old-fashioned, steaming hot plum pudding, is made with gelatin and served cold with whipped cream. It is a chocolate plum pudding. Something new for your family. As this recipe is not in your green cookbook, I'll read it very slowly today so you will be sure to get every word. I wouldn't have you miss this recipe, because it is inexpensive, delicious and especially attractive to look at. Good for a company dinner any time during the winter.

There are twelve ingredients. Quite a lot to write down but I'll go slowly.

2 tablespoons of granulated gelatin  
1 cup of cold water  
1 pint of milk  
1 cup of sugar  
1 and 1/2 squares of chocolate  
1/2 teaspoon of vanilla  
1 cup of seeded raisins  
3/4 of a cup of dates  
1/2 cup of nuts  
1/2 cup of currants, and  
3 egg whites

That's a long list. I'll go over it again while you check. (Repeat)

To make this pudding, first soften the gelatin in the cold water for ten minutes. While the gelatin is soaking, melt the chocolate with part of the sugar. When it is melted, add a little of the milk, just enough to make a smooth paste. Put the rest of the milk in the upper part of the double boiler. When the milk is hot, add to it the melted chocolate. Then the sugar and salt. And, finally, the soaked gelatin. Stir the mixture. Then remove it from the fire. Set it away to grow cold. When it begins to thicken, add the vanilla, the fruit, and the chopped nut meats. Then fold in the beaten egg whites.

Now turn the mixture into a wet pudding mold decorated with whole nut meats and raisins. Set the mold in the refrigerator or other cold place, to chill. When the pudding is cold and firm, and it is time for serving at dinner, turn it out on a pudding plate or platter. Garnish it with sprigs of holly. A wreath of holly springs around the edge and one stuck in the top makes it look like a real Christmas pudding.

Serve the pudding with whipped cream, sweetened and flavored with vanilla, or with a currant jelly sauce.

Crisp homemade wafers or cookies will be good with it.

The baked ham is an inexpensive Christmas meat, especially good for serving a large crowd. What's more, a slice of this reddish meat on the plate adds to our color scheme. The best directions for cooking a ham are to be found in that leaflet called cooking cured pork.--One of that series of nice meat leaflets I've spoken of so frequently.

Here's the way that leaflet advises preparing the ham:





First you wash and scrape the ham thoroughly. Then soak it overnight in a large pan with cold water to cover it. In the morning wipe the ham dry.

Now place it, rind side up, on a rack in an open pan. Do not add water and do not cover it. Bake the ham in a slow oven (260 degrees F.).

Between 25 and 30 minutes per pound will probably be required to bake a whole ham. For half hams, proportionately more time is necessary. For example, shank ends usually need from 40 to 45 minutes per pound. And butt ends need from 45 to 55 minutes per pound.

When your ham is done, remove the rind.

Next, make a paste of 2 cups of brown sugar and 3 cups of fine soft bread crumbs and 1 teaspoon of prepared mustard, and enough cider and vinegar to moisten the mixture. Dear me, did I go too fast? Well, I'll go over those ingredients for the paste again. Mix 2 cups of brown sugar, 3 cups of fine soft bread crumbs, 1 teaspoon of prepared mustard, and enough cider or vinegar to make a paste.

Now spread this paste over the fat covering of the baked ham. Then stick long-stemmed cloves down into the surface of the ham--dot them all over. Then put the ham, with its new coat, back into a hot oven for 10 minutes.

That's all there is to write today.

Let's consider decorations for the Christmas table next.

An evergreen wreath and red candles makes an easy, simple and most decorative centerpiece. If you like you can use a circle of candles for the center of the table. The young son of the house can fix a tin standard to hold a circle of candles, if you provide him with some tin shears and an old tin box. I saw a very practical one the other day that a schoolboy had made from tin, with tacks to stick candles on. Any rich green foliage will keep fresh throughout the holiday week will be satisfactory for wreaths. But, of course, the evergreen must not be too near the lighted candles. Against the evergreen background of the wreath you can lay groups of bright berries, rose hips, tiny kumquats with their bright orange color, or pine cones. I saw a picture the other day of an oblong table with a simple long runner on it. In the center of the table was an oblong wreath of evergreen, holly and cones. In the center of the wreath were three tall red candles.

If there are children in the family, they will enjoy a tiny Christmas tree for a centerpiece. A small evergreen, decorated with bright bits of tinsel, shiny red balls and artificial snow will make the Christmas dinner extra pleasant to them.

Tomorrow: "Chicken for Holiday Meals."

